



MT. CULMEN CLARION

A Newsletter of Mt. Culmen EC Church

***“What I tell you in the dark, say in the light;
and what you hear whispered, shout from the rooftops!”***

Volume 6 - Issue 11 - November 2023

Pastor

Rev. Jonathan J. Brown
717-205-6532

Lay Delegate

Rebekah Brown

Alternate Lay Delegate

Kenneth Bannon

Board President

Floyd Mast

Board Vice President

Delrea Ream

Board Secretary

Sharon Mast

Church Treasurer

Esther Stauffer

Trustees:

**Floyd Mast
Barry Ream
David Rissler
Ian Pammer**

Stewards:

**Esther Stauffer
Joyce Garber
Kim Sweigart
Brenna Pammer**

Members-at-Large:

**Sharon Mast
Delrea Ream**



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Order, Order in the Church!

– Rev. Jonathan Brown

We've been studying the Book of Numbers together for a while; it might be a good idea to take stock of where we've been lately. Chapter 10 ended with Israel finally getting up from the area around Mt. Sinai and moving on – but moving on with God leading the way. No sooner do they go on the march behind him, though, than the people start to engage in their favorite pastime: grumbling and complaining. Time and again, as they express their lack of faith and as they resist the leadership of Moses, chapters 11 and 12 show them getting a dose of discipline.

Then chapters 13 and 14 brought us to a sharp turning point. Each of the twelve non-Levite tribes sends a scout into Canaan to bring back a report; all but Joshua (of Ephraim) and Caleb (of Judah) tell a scary story, until Israel votes to go back to Egypt and beg to be slaves again – rebelling against the God who saved them. Moses prays and secures their pardon for their great sin, but forgiveness doesn't erase consequences. The penalty they pay is that their inheritance (the promised land) will be withheld until the rebellious generation has all died in the desert.

To reassure them, in chapter 15 God gives them a bunch of laws built on the premise that they really will find a safe home in the promised land in the next generation. And he concludes this with a law telling each Israelite to wear a cord of priestly blue in their tassels, as a sign of their holy status as a nation. But in chapter 16, this statement of the holiness of Israel becomes a pretext for a new scheme. A Levite named Korah, along with a couple Reubenites and a bunch of chiefs (perhaps also Levites), insists that if all Israel is holy, then this 'priesthood of all Israelites' gives them the same rights and privileges that Moses and Aaron had. If all Israel is holy, they say, then there's no room for a hierarchy. Israel has to be democratic, egalitarian, where anyone can approach.

In chapter 16, that idea is put to the test, and it does not go well for Korah & Co. Moses successfully makes the case to God that Israel as a whole shouldn't be held responsible, because Korah misled them. So only Korah and his co-conspirators die. Naturally, Israel's next move is to prove Moses wrong for defending them, by threatening to lynch Moses and Aaron for 'killing the people of the LORD.' When God's wrath breaks out in Israel, Aaron – as high priest – has to stand in its path, at the line between the living and the dead, with worship as his only shield, and the Angel of Death stands down. Then, as we read last month, chapter 17 aims to settle the argument once and for all, with Aaron's dead-wood staff coming miraculously to life in the LORD's presence.

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Mount Culmen Evangelical Congregational Church

1885 Turkey Hill Road, East Earl, PA 17519

Sunday Morning Worship: 10:00 AM

Board Meeting Notes (October 2023)

Last month, the Official Board of Mt. Culmen Evangelical Congregational Church convened its meeting after the worship service on Sunday, October 1, 2023, so as to conduct the regular business of the church. In attendance at the meeting were 10 out of the 13 members of our church board: Floyd Mast, Sharon Mast, Del Ream, Barry Ream, Dave Rissler, Esther Stauffer, Joyce Garber, Ken Bannon, Rev. Jonathan Brown, and Rebekah Brown.

Opening with prayer and roll call, the board heard the customary reports.

Of these, the treasurer's report submitted by Esther Stauffer noted:

- September 2023 income of \$3,749.00
- September 2023 expenses of \$4,025.32
- a September 30 ending balance of \$6,778.11

The secretary's report was accepted unanimously on the motion of Del Ream, seconded by Dave Rissler.

The treasurer's report was accepted unanimously on the motion of Dave Rissler, seconded by Joyce Garber.

The stewards had no report to give at this time.

The trustees fielded several questions from members of the board. Esther made note of a light over the fellowship hall doors that wasn't working. Floyd suggested that a switch inside the fellowship hall might have been off, but that he would look at it. (*N.B. – The trustees ended up replacing the light over the fellowship hall doors – see page 14.*) Pastor Jonathan asked for an update on the land sale negotiations which the congregation had approved at the special congregational meeting on July 9. Floyd reported that he had contacted the prospective buyer, Tony, and received the answer that, after assessing our sale offer, they could not make it work; however, Tony's father-in-law would check with others in the family. Floyd had not heard any further updates beyond that, but would reach out again.

Under the heading of old business, the board first discussed the then-upcoming October 7 yard sale and soup sale (*see page 4*). It was determined that Barry, Dave, and perhaps Ian would move tables on the evening of Friday, October 6, and that Esther Stauffer would be present to accept soups and baked goods. To a question about how many tables had been rented out, Esther reported that, per her information from Cindy Ruth (who organized the yard sale), 21 spaces had been rented out, but not all of them with tables – e.g., one vendor was bringing racks of clothing. All in all, she said, it wasn't the most spaces we'd rented out, but it wasn't too far behind, either. Rebekah Brown reported that Cindy Ruth had placed an ad in the *Shopping News*, while Pastor Jonathan had placed an ad on Facebook, and both the pastor and Cindy Ruth had advertised also on Nextdoor. Ken Bannon inquired how many responses we had gotten to advertisements; Rebekah said she was not sure. To a question when the signs would be placed in front of the church and at the corner, Esther said she'd try to have them there the Monday before the event.

Second, Pastor Jonathan inquired whether any progress had been made in searching for alternative lawn care / lawn treatment providers. Esther said that one option that had initially looked promising was turning out to have negative reviews. She clarified, in response to a question, that the service we're seeking would include fertilizing, weed care, and more. (She also noted the need to review the latest bill from our current provider and check with them, as Esther saw some discrepancies between what they'd been doing and what we'd been asking for.) Rebekah asked when we would need to make our decision. Esther reported that the payment cycle runs spring to fall. Ken Bannon suggested a veteran-run business based out of Ronks, and agreed to get information about them for the next board meeting.

Third, the board returned to the matter of our Harvest Home celebration, which at the previous meeting had been scheduled for October 15 but without designating a recipient for our collection. The two major options discussed at that time had been CrossNet Ministries (as in prior years) or the Northeastern Lancaster County Food Bank based in Terre Hill. Several board members made the case for switching to the Terre Hill Food Bank, on the grounds that CrossNet receives so much assistance from other churches (including larger churches) and from government funding and since the Terre Hill Food Bank needs more support, especially as they're up to 36 families being served. It was noted, however, that some overflow from CrossNet is given to the Terre Hill Food Bank.

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(Continued from Page 2, "Board Meeting Notes")

After some time of discussion from that perspective, Pastor Jonathan made a case for a different approach. He said that, while it's true that CrossNet has more supporting organizations, our contributions to them are no less valuable – as Barry Ream had already said, "We are small, but we are mighty." Currently, he said, we undertake 12 collections annually for Terre Hill, whereas Harvest Home is our once-per-year bigger collection of goods for CrossNet. While it's true that Terre Hill is smaller and needs plenty of support, it's also true, the pastor said, that CrossNet Ministries engages in more types of ministry – not only feeding the hungry, but housing the homeless and providing other social services, and does so no less impressively. In this regard, CrossNet is the premier all-purpose parachurch ministry in our area, and Pastor Jonathan suggested it would seem strange to withdraw support from them without a good reason. Furthermore, if overflow from their pantry really does sometimes go to Terre Hill, then we have no reason to fear that support for CrossNet will leave Terre Hill neglected.

Once cases for both approaches had been made, the board continued its discussion. Barry suggested that the case for CrossNet for Harvest Home made a lot of sense. Del pointed out that currently, donations for Terre Hill in the back are down, perhaps because people are saving up for Harvest Home this month – a point well received by the board. Joyce suggested that if donations for Terre Hill are low in certain months, perhaps the board could compensate by setting a monetary donation. Esther acknowledged that it could be worth considering, but that our finances now are lower than they have been – though they're fine overall, since all the bigger bills have been covered for the year now.

Esther recommended that we continue our prior practice (Harvest Home for CrossNet, plus the regular collection each month for Terre Hill), and reevaluate next year after seeing if the Terre Hill collection suffers from it. "I think Pastor Jonathan gave a convincing argument," Esther said. She therefore motioned to make CrossNet Ministries the recipient of our 2023 Harvest Home collection, to be revisited in 2024. This motion was seconded by Rebekah Brown and was passed unanimously by the board. (*See page 5 for more on Harvest Home this year.*)

Under the heading of new business, the board had several other items of business and information. First, Esther told the board that on the preceding Tuesday (September 26), Carol Moore had taken the stained-glass windows from either side of the pulpit nook for repairs, since they were bowed outward. These will likely be the last windows dealt with in the current season, given the need of warmth to keep the glass pliant. These windows should cost about \$300 for the repairs. Ken inquired how many more windows should be repaired next year. Esther said that some of the weldments can be reattached without removing the windows, but we can't be certain yet.

Second, Rebekah Brown stated her plans to revise the church directory, to be printed in late November so that we all have updated contact information for Christmas cards and for telephone chains before the onset of winter weather. Rebekah asked if she had the board's blessing to proceed. By consensus, affirmation of her work was given.

Third, Pastor Jonathan informed the board that, in service of his work as the Evangelical Congregational Church's National Conference Archivist, he would be taking on a new challenge: going back to school to earn a master's degree in library and information science, with a specialization in archival science. He will pursue his studies in an online program offered by Louisiana State University, and was to begin his first class on October 16. Pastor Jonathan wanted to make the board aware of this because it would likely lead to reductions in the amount of time he has available for some of his extra church work. (Pastor Jonathan is technically paid for 15 hours per week, but noted that it has not been uncommon for him to put in 60 to even 90 hours of work some weeks.) He suggested that shorter newsletters would likely be one consequence, but that only time could really show the rest. Nonetheless, he said that he would do his best to continue ministering faithfully to all his Mt. Culmen family at the same time.

There being no further business after that, on motion of Barry Ream, as seconded by Dave Rissler,
the board adjourned its meeting, to reconvene following the worship service on **Sunday, November 5, 2023.**

Thanks for your support for our October 7 yard sale, craft fair, and soup sale event!
Although it was raining hard all morning, we ended up raising \$1,668.54 for our church.
Please see pictures on next page.



Thanks also for your support for Harvest Home on Sunday, October 15 (pictures below)! In addition to our ongoing collections for the Northeastern Lancaster County Food Bank in Terre Hill, for Harvest Home we collected 315 pounds of goods (plus two cases of paper) for CrossNet Ministries. Although CrossNet has many partners, an hour before we delivered our donation they were talking about our church by name! Our support is bigger than our size. You really make a difference, Mt. Culmen!



(Continued from Page 1, "Order, Order in the Church!")

That brings us now to the end of chapter 17, which forms a bridge into chapter 18. The Tribe of Levi as such has just been vindicated as having a privilege granted to no other tribe. And yet it was a Levite who abused his position and sparked a rebellion in which so many had died. Now, with the other tribes visibly shown that they have no business in the tabernacle, they engage in their other favorite pastime: being extremely dramatic. *"Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone! Everyone who comes near, who comes near to the Tabernacle of the LORD, shall die! Are we all to perish?"* (Numbers 17:12-13).

After seeing so much punishment, the popular sentiment in Israel now is that living with God is just not possible. It's too dangerous! Having God as their next-door neighbor seems in their eyes to be basically a death sentence – a source of destruction, not of salvation. They know that *"our God is a Consuming Fire"* (Hebrews 12:29, cf. Deuteronomy 4:24). They've seen too many people get burnt. It seems in their eyes as if no one is exempt. And so they despair of finding any way to coexist with a Consuming Fire.

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Last month was Pastor Appreciation Month, and we at Mt. Culmen observed it on Sunday, October 22. The congregation gave Pastor Jonathan some warm words of appreciation, a card, an appreciation gift, and a lovely wall hanging of Isaiah 53:3 stitched by our own Abby Eberly. After the service, we gathered in the fellowship hall for a lovely potluck luncheon with plenty of dessert!



Upcoming Church Events

- **Operation Christmas Child – Shoebox Blessing** – This year again, we have the opportunity to take part in Operation Christmas Child, a Christmas gift ministry of Samaritan's Purse, in which participants will fill shoeboxes with toys that will then be sent to children in need around the world. Please follow guidelines below to fill your shoebox, and then return them to the church by November 12. A blessing of the shoeboxes will take place during our regular worship service on Sunday, **November 12, 2023**.
 - When you take a shoebox, Pastor Jonathan will sign you out a label. The label has further instructions. It will allow you to choose whether you intend your shoebox to go to a boy or a girl, and to select an age range (2-4, 5-9, or 10-14). This shipping label will then be attached to your box when you are done.
 - To fill your shoebox, please remember to not include candy, toothpaste, gum, used or damaged items, scary or war-related items, seeds, foods, liquids, lotions, medicine, vitamins, or canned goods.
 - Please do have a 'wow' item (e.g., a stuffed animal), some personal care items (toothbrushes, combs, hairbrushes, washcloths), school supplies (pens/pencils, crayons, notebooks), accessories (socks, sunglasses, etc.), toys and other fun things, and maybe a note, if you like.
 - Each shoebox has a \$10 shipping fee. To cover this, we have placed a special basket on the back table and ask people to please place \$10/box there (as cash or as a check made out to Mt. Culmen EC Church).
- **Terre Hill Food Bank** – Each month, we have the opportunity to bless our community by contribution to our church's monthly collection for the Northeastern Lancaster County Food Bank. (This month, needs include: tissues, canned corn, canned mixed vegetables, assorted soups, and small bottles of unscented laundry detergent.) We are one of twelve church sponsors. In addition, each church gets to send volunteers once a quarter to help food pantry clients collect their food and take it to their cars, and this month it's our turn! If you can, please join us in the basement of St. Paul's United Methodist Church (105 West Main Street, Terre Hill, next to the cemetery) on Thursday, **November 16, 2023**, anywhere between 1:00pm and 6:00pm.

Upcoming Community Events

- **ELANCO Library Autumn Jubilee** – On Thursday, **November 2, 2023**, ELANCO Library will hold their Autumn Jubilee fundraiser at the Silk Mill (328 East Main Street, New Holland), doors opening at 5:45pm.
- **Concert** – On Friday, **November 17, 2023**, at 7:00pm, Lancaster Bible College will hosting a concert in their Good Shepherd Chapel (901 Eden Road, Lancaster) featuring Christian musicians Colton Dixon and Jordan Feliz as part of their “Love + Light Tour.” Tickets are available by calling 717-459-3701.
- **Servant Stage** – Also on Friday, **November 17, 2023**, at 7:00pm, Garden Spot Village's chapel (433 South Kinzer Avenue, New Holland) will be the scene where the Servant Stage Company will perform their First Look 2024 event, with an announcement of near year's shows and a variety of live and virtual performances.
- **German Christmas Market** – On Saturday, **November 18, 2023**, from 8:00am to 9:00pm, Weaverland Anabaptist Faith Community (210 Weaverland Valley Road, East Earl) will hold a German Christmas market and auction in their fellowship hall.
- **Brass Concert** – On Saturday, **November 18, 2023**, at 7:00pm, Garden Spot Village's chapel will host a concert by Auscultation Brass, a Lancaster-based brass band whose members are all doctors.
- **Thanksgiving Service** – On Sunday evening, **November 19, 2023**, at 7:00pm, Garden Spot Village invites you to their chapel for a special service of community thanksgiving, featuring hymns, musical performances, Scripture readings, poems, reflections, and much to be thankful for.
- **Christmas on Main** – On Saturday, **November 25, 2023**, the New Holland Business Association will again present its annual Christmas on Main event. In addition to a Christmas market (9am-2pm), food vendors (11am-7pm), assorted rides for the children plus Santa's arrival at 3:00pm, there will be a community lighting of a Christmas tree at 6:00pm, followed by a laser light show.
- **Community Meal** – On Monday, **November 27, 2023**, from 5:30pm to 6:30pm, CrossNet Ministries will provide a free community meal at their youth center (110 West Franklin Street, New Holland).
- **Christmas in the Park** – From Friday, **December 1**, through Sunday, **December 3, 2023**, Terre Hill will, in their Terre Hill Park (210 Lancaster Avenue, Terre Hill), from 5:00pm to 9:00pm each night, hold Christmas in the Park, complete with food, lights, activities, entertainment, and vendors.

Mailbag

From Madelynne Walker, 7 October 2023

Hello from the Ozarks! I hope everyone is doing well and enjoying a stunning autumn. I just wanted to give a short update on Savannah's and my lives. We are both taking 17-19 credits this fall. I am working in the stained glass and candle shop again, and Savannah is in the cafeteria. We are improving our customer service skills.

Thank you for your prayers. This last week, Savannah and I have found a home church. It is in Omaha, Arkansas, and has around 40 members with a very similar atmosphere to Mt. Culmen. We are inviting our college buddies to go with us, and so far it has been so wonderful to be a part of a church again. The church doesn't have a pastor currently because he retired in June.

This last month, I have started to get some tests done to figure out why my legs hurt whenever I exercise. I had X-rays and MRIs, and so far the doctors have not found anything abnormal. The weather seems to be a huge influence in what my legs feel. This week we had gorgeous fall weather, and they felt better than they have in a long time. Praise God. My mom and I are working on figuring out what other tests need to be completed to fully understand what is happening.

I drive tractor at a harvest festival during the fall, giving hayrides. This last week we closed the ride early and I began helping clean up. Pretty soon I heard someone say that there was a man injured at the bottom of the giant slide. God gave me wisdom in asking questions to help this man. He had heard his neck crack when his inner-tube hit the haybales at the bottom of the slide. Everyone was praying during the whole incident. I'm so thankful I was able to help. The man and his family came back again tonight, and he is doing just fine. Praise God.

The other day, Savannah and I sat down at a BBQ outside the cafeteria with a freshman girl for lunch. We started talking to her about life, and all of a sudden she said, "Whoa." We asked her what was wrong, and she said she was having deja vu. She said she had once had a dream that she would be having that very conversation at a picnic. It's pretty cool to see how God is placing us in situations that only he could have known would happen. It's been reassuring to now that we are where He wants us right now.

Love you all,

To God be the glory,

– Madelynne Walker

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(Continued from Page 5, "Order, Order in the Church!")

Chapter 18 is God's response to this fear and confusion, in the form of three speeches: the first two given to Aaron, and the third given to Moses. It's a very striking change from what we usually see, which is God always speaking by means of Moses. Here, Aaron gets the first couple messages, meant to answer Israel's popular panic with reassurance – but also with correction. Tabernacle access is not all-or-nothing. There are safe and unsafe ways for Israel to interact with God's presence. And if they'd actually follow instructions for a change, they'd stop lighting themselves on fire! In fact, almost everything God says to Aaron in the first two speeches is God repeating things he's already said earlier in Numbers or in Leviticus. It's a post-Korah reminder.

In the first speech (18:1-7), God offers a general picture of the areas of responsibility among the priests and Levites. First, Aaron and his sons will constitute Israel's priesthood for as long as the covenant last. As a result, theirs is the responsibility to "*bear iniquity connected with your priesthood*" (18:1). This is a special service given exclusively to the sons of Aaron, to serve in all matters directly connected with the altar and with the most-sacred space behind the veil (the 'Holy of Holies' section) – and any outsider who invades or interferes must die (18:7). That sounds scary. But on the other hand, so long as Aaron and his sons are faithful in guarding the sanctuary and altar and in the completion of their holy ministries, then it's really possible that "*there may never again be wrath on the people of Israel*" (18:5). If the priests do their jobs, they can make it so Israel never gets burned ever again!

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Featured Hymn: “The Church's One Foundation”

Original Text by Samuel John Stone (1866)

Comments by Pastor Jonathan

1. The Church's one foundation
Is JESUS CHRIST her Lord,
She is His new creation
By water and the Word:
From Heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy Bride,
With His Own Blood He bought her
And for her life He died.

5. 'Mid toil and tribulation
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest!

2. She is from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one Faith, one Birth,
One Holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one Holy Food,
And to one Hope she presses
With every grace endued.

6. Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three and One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won,
With all her sons and daughters
Who, by the Master's Hand
Led through the deathly waters,
Repose in Eden-land.

3. The Church shall never perish!
Her dear Lord to defend,
To guide, sustain, and cherish,
Is with her to the end:
Though there be those who hate her,
And false sons in her pale,
Against or foe or traitor
She ever shall prevail.

7. O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee:
There, past the border mountains,
Where in sweet vales the Bride
With Thee by living fountains
For ever shall abide! *Amen.*

4. Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppress,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distrest:
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up “How long?”
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song!

Original text taken from
*Lyra Fidelium: Twelve Hymns
on the Twelve Articles
of the Apostles' Creed*
(Oxford and London:
Messrs. Parker and Co., 1866),
pages 38, 40, 42 (Article IX).

Appears in *The Singing Church*
as hymn #206 (verses 1-2, 4-5, 6a+7a).

Samuel J. Stone (1839-1900), a son of Rev. William Stone who himself had published several volumes of hymns, was born in the parish of Whitmore in the county of Staffordshire, but his family moved to London when Samuel was 13.

Samuel attended Charterhouse School and later went to study at Pembroke College in Oxford, earning his BA degree in 1862.

Samuel was ordained a priest of the Church of England on December 20, 1863 by Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, the son of the famed William Wilberforce.

Once ordained, Rev. Samuel J. Stone began serving a church in Windsor, in Berkshire. Even though he took other churches later (Haggerston in 1870 and London in 1890), it was while serving his curacy in Windsor, that he published an important book: *Lyra Fidelium* (1866).

Subtitled *Twelve Hymns on the Twelve Articles of the Apostles' Creed*, this book contained just that: commentary on each of the twelve articles of the creed, and a hymn written for each.

The ninth article of the Apostles' Creed reads: “I believe in the holy catholic church; the communion of saints.” In *Lyra Fidelium* (actually released on Christmas 1865), summarizing the truths confessed here, Rev. S. J. Stone writes:

I believe that the Church of Christ is, has been, and will be one and the same: that it is holy in respect of (1) its Author and End, (2) the vocation of all the baptized, (3) the true saints within it: that it is One, by unity of organization, of faith, of hope, of charity, of sacraments, of discipline: that it is Catholic, as being universally disseminated, as teaching all truth, as possessing all graces: that its truly sanctified members have communion with the Holy Trinity, with the Angels, and with all Saints on earth and in Paradise.

But it's the hymn that Rev. Stone (just 27 years old at the time!) penned to go along with this article which has lasted the ages: a hymn starting with those marvelously majestic, deeply biblical words, “The Church's One Foundation...”

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(Continued from Page 9, "Featured Hymn")

One obituary – printed in London's *Daily News* on 22 November 1900 – paints a picture of the origins of this hymn:

The story of how Mr. Stone composed his world-famed hymns may be of interest, especially as it was told by himself to the writer. He had taken a curacy at Windsor, in 1862, and found a lamentable ignorance existing among his parishioners on simple questions of faith. He pondered how he might remove this ignorance, and coming home one day, tired and weary with several parochial visits, he suddenly had the inspiration of writing "The Church's One Foundation."

In this hymn, we have the benefit of Rev. Stone himself having printed, alongside the text in *Lyra Fidelium*, each and every scripture verse on which he based each line. The first verse opens by announcing that the Church has only one foundation: Jesus Christ himself – because, as Paul writes, "*No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ*" (1 Corinthians 3:11). There can be nothing else the Church is built on – if it's built on any other foundation, it isn't his church at all. Everything about the Church can only begin to make sense when you see that foundation. Moreover, the Church is a "new creation" – something drastically new, a blast out of the destiny God's given for the whole universe – given birth "by water and the word" – because "*unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*" (John 3:5), and "*Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her with the washing of water with the word*" (Ephesians 5:25-26). This explains the rest of the stanza: "From heaven he came and sought her / to be his holy bride; / with his own blood he bought her, / and for her life he died." The reference to 'his own blood' comes from Paul's reference to "*the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood*" (Acts 20:28). The overall picture is the depth of Christ's love for the Church: he created it by 'water and the word' (baptism), gave it life through his death on the cross, and all this to fulfill his quest for a Bride – the very reason he came down from heaven was to seek out *a Bride*, the Church!

The second stanza turns at first to the human origin of the church: "She is from every nation" (or, as our hymnal has it, "Elect from every nation" – Rev. Stone himself made this editorial change later on) – because Jesus "*ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation*" (Revelation 5:9). The human origins of the church transcend every demographic division of humanity – ethnicity, language, culture, politics, etc. – and yet, by God's grace, the Church is "one over all the earth," given a unity that we're responsible to preserve intact. One of the four classic marks of the Church is its oneness/unity; another is its catholicity, which includes being the universal church across all the earth. As Paul says, "*We who are many are one body*" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

The next few lines lay out the church's "charter of salvation" – our constitution, if you will: "One Lord, one Faith, one Birth." Here, Rev. Stone very lightly glosses Paul's statement "*One Lord, one faith, one baptism*" (Ephesians 4:5). Why are we united? We are united in having the same Lord, Jesus Christ; we are united in having the same core commitment, loyalty to and reliance upon and trust in Jesus; and we are united in having all been born as equals – maybe not when we were born by our parents, but when we were born again 'of water and the Spirit' at baptism, as Rev. Stone reads those passages. We became a family. The Church is also one since "one Holy Name she blesses" in prayer – for "*there is no other name under heaven given among humans by which we must be saved,*" other than the one supreme name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). We share the same confession, we speak the same name. We also are united because we have the same sustenance: the Church "partakes one Holy Food," the Eucharist (or Lord's Supper, or Communion) – like Paul says, "*We all partake of the one bread*" (1 Corinthians 10:17). Taking the life and death of Jesus into our very bodies, we get our life from him – the same life. And we're all chasing the same goal: "And to one Hope she presses with every grace endued." All the grace God gives us is meant to get us all to the same place: "*There is one Body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call..., but grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift*" (Ephesians 4:4,7).

After the rich second stanza comes a third verse that our hymnal omits (and which, to be fair, Rev. Stone himself later dropped from his hymn), starting with the declaration that "the Church shall never perish!" With all our tendency to worry, isn't that a good assurance? Jesus promised to build the Church on a solid rock, "*and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" (Matthew 16:18). Jesus defends the Church, guides the Church, sustains the Church, and cherishes the Church; and to do this, he is "with her to the end" – for, as he himself said, "*Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*" (Matthew 28:20).

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(Continued from Page 10, "Featured Hymn")

It's true that the Church has adversaries. "There be those that hate her," Rev. Stone admits. There are people in this world who truly hate the church: *"Do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you"* (1 John 3:13)! Not only that, there are also "false sons in her pale" – fake believers, much as St. Paul referred to *"false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery"* (Galatians 2:4). And yet, for all the real damage that hateful opponents outside and frauds and sinners inside can do, we have the promise that, in the end, the Church "ever shall prevail" against "foe or traitor" – or, as the prophet said, *"Rejoice not over me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall rise"* (Micah 7:8)!

The fourth verse, where our hymnal picks up again, focuses more on the *damage* done by the aforementioned "foes" and "traitors." Because especially of false Christians, "men see her [the Church] sore oppressed," and persecutors and opponents view this "with a scornful wonder." It's as the Bible forewarned us: *"Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the Way of Truth will be blasphemed"* (2 Peter 2:2). The Church is 'sore oppressed' in that it is "by schisms rent asunder" – that is, divided, cut apart (as if with scissors) into competing movements or groups, with some even cut off from the Church's unity. Alas, we know something about that! Paul already lamented that *"when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you"* (1 Corinthians 11:18). The Church is further 'sore oppressed' in that it is "by heresies distressed" – or as Paul wrote, *"there must be heresies among you, in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized"* (1 Corinthians 11:19). The Church is split into pieces and infected with denials of the truth – all of which injure the Church and give rise to slanders against it. (At the time Rev. Stone wrote this hymn, a split was taking place in the Church of South Africa because one missionary bishop there, John William Colenso, began endorsing polygamy, denied eternal punishment, and started discounting books of the Bible as fictional. Rev. Stone was *not* a fan of this!)

And yet all this doesn't go unnoticed, Rev. Stone says: "Yet saints their watch are keeping, / their cry goes up, 'How long?'" He cites Peter's instruction, *"Watch unto prayer"* (1 Peter 4:7), and the psalmist's prayer, *"Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles"* (Psalm 25:22). Even from heaven, the souls of the saints look down and cry out, "How long?" (Revelation 6:9-10). Eventually, those prayers **will** be answered, and so "soon the night of weeping / shall be the morn of song" – for *"the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"* (Isaiah 51:11).

The fifth verse begins again in the place of the earthly church's "toil and tribulation and tumult of her war," since we *"wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers"* (Ephesians 6:12), gaining victory insofar as *"we are more than conquerors"* (Romans 8:37). But we don't have to wrestle and struggle forever. We're waiting for "the consummation / of peace forevermore," trusting Paul's assurance that *"the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly"* (Romans 16:20). We will enter our true peace when "with the vision glorious, / her [the Church's] longing eyes are blessed" – for *"we know that, when he [Christ] shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"* (1 John 3:2). And then "the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest" – for *"there remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God"* (Hebrews 4:9).

Retreating from our destiny to our present, the sixth verse celebrates that, even now while we're "on earth," the Church "hath union / with God the Three-in-One" ("Three and One," in the original, but with the same reference to the Trinity) – and here he cites 1 John 1:3 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity. Not only do we have union with the Triune God, but we have "mystic sweet communion / with those whose rest is won" – we are not torn away from believers who have already finished their earthly race, but rather, *"ye are come unto the heavenly Jerusalem and to an innumerable company of angels and to the general assembly and church of the firstborn... and to the spirits of just men made perfect"* (Hebrews 12:22-23).

In a few lines taken out of our hymnal (because the author himself took them out of later versions of the hymn), Rev. Stone clarifies that these triumphant believers in heaven are "all her [the Church's] sons and daughters / who, by the Master's hand," have been already "led through the deathly waters." They have 'crossed the Jordan,' as many hymns call it. Rev. Stone gets this from God's promise that *"when you pass through the waters, I will be with you"* (Isaiah 43:2). And, on the other side of those "deathly waters," the believers who died in Christ now "repose in Eden-land," as Jesus told the repentant thief, *"Today you will be with me in Paradise"* (Luke 23:43). (Continued on Page 12)

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In the seventh and final stanza, we think about how much those fellow believers in Paradise are now enjoying, and we exclaim, "O happy ones and holy!" They are happy, because they have gone to be with the Lord; they are holy, because all their sins and stains have been already purged away by the brightness of his grace (for nothing yet imperfect can enter God's heaven). They triumphed over the world through their humble witness and humble lives – hence, Rev. Stone calls them "the meek and lowly." But he prays – and he gives us words to pray – that the Lord would "give us grace," so that "we / like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with thee."

Rev. Stone turns, for these promises, to passages like Jude's doxology ("*Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy*" [Jude 24]) and Peter's call to humility ("*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that, at the proper time, he may exalt you*" [1 Peter 5:6]). We trust that God is indeed able to keep us from stumbling, and able to present us joyfully in the presence of his glory – though we must strive and cooperate. And because we trust that God can do that, we commit ourselves to living humble lives under the hand of God, recognizing him as sovereign, trusting and hoping in him, and calling out for the day when he will see our humility and choose to exalt us to "dwell on high" with himself.

The original text of the hymn closes with four more lines that Rev. Stone later removed and which consequently are absent from the version we sing. It imagines the geography of life, and puts our eternal dwelling "past the border mountains" to the "sweet vales," or valley fields, where "the Bride" – the Church, as the Bride of the Lamb – will live forever. Those fields in the new earth are the goal. The image is drawn from when John was taken up "*to a great and high mountain*" and from there saw the descent of "*that great city, the Holy Jerusalem*" (Revelation 21:10), which is the final form of the Church made fully manifest. This is where we all intend to live, by the grace of God, if only we persevere! We cannot yet see over the mountains; we only have that beautiful report.

And there, "the Bride / with thee [the Lord] by living fountains / forever shall abide." Here, Rev. Stone combines the thoughts from two other verses in Revelation. First is a promise that "*the Lamb... shall lead them unto living fountains of waters,*" or, as a more modern translation has it, "*the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes*" (Revelation 7:17). The Lamb is Jesus, the destined Husband of the Church; and the 'living fountains,' or 'springs of living water,' are where he intends to lead his Bride to live: somewhere where life never ends, where refreshment never ends, where beauty and joy never end. And best of all, he will be there – Jesus will be with us, among us, in person! "*The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them*" (Revelation 21:3).

By the time Rev. Samuel John Stone himself 'passed over the deathly waters' in November 1900 – (his last words, said over and over, were "Glory to God") – this hymn "The Church's One Foundation" had already become his most popular work. In 1868, just two years after *Lyra Fidelium* was published, this hymn was reprinted as Hymn #320 in the first appendix to a popular hymn collection, *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (with all the editorial changes we have in our hymnal today). It very quickly attracted popular attention, as shown by its use at the Oxford Choral Festival in June 1869, the West Yorkshire Plain Song Union in July 1869, and the Church Congress at Liverpool in October 1869, leading up to its use as a processional in December 1869 when Samuel Wilberforce (the very man who'd ordained Rev. Stone to the priesthood a few years earlier) was enthroned as the new Bishop of Winchester. By June 1870, just four years after its initial publication, it was already a "well-known" hymn. (It was then, as now, sung to the tune 'Aurelia' composed by Samuel Sebastian Wesley – the grandson of Charles Wesley, author of many of our most beloved hymns.) Three years after Rev. Stone's death, one reviewer remarked that this hymn "has gained a popularity even beyond the limits of the Church, which seems almost to have taken it for her National Anthem."

We could do a lot worse for a 'national anthem' for the Church! From beginning to end, this hymn presents us with a Christ-focused gospel for the Church – the Church was sought by Christ, bought by Christ, founded by Christ, united by Christ, defended and guided by Christ, fiercely loved by Christ, and is destined – in spite of all present 'toil and tribulation and tumult of her war' – to live forever with Christ in nuptial bliss. The Church already enjoys immense spiritual blessings, and the Church expects infinitely greater blessings to come. This hymn is rich in ecclesiology (doctrine of the Church), which – although not always a historic strength of our Evangelical movement – we most desperately need. Let us, then, be devotedly *sons and daughters of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church!*

(Continued from Page 8, "Order, Order in the Church!")

To understand all this, we need to appreciate just how seriously God takes holiness. God is dead-serious about the objectively sacred status of the tabernacle, its furnishings, its functions, its personnel – everything about it must be exactly kept sacred. And that might be a mental challenge for us, because we're not used to thinking in those terms – that some places and some things can be really holy in a way that requires such cautious treatment. Is anybody at our church worried that, if they step behind the altar rail, they might explode in a fireball? Probably not. But God takes these kinds of things seriously, at least at the tabernacle. Why?

One analogy that might help is to think about an operating room in a hospital. When it's in operation, a doctor before entering has to 'scrub in' – undergo certain intense purification rituals (i.e., thoroughly wash his or her arms and hands with a brush and strong soap) – before entering the surgical field. He or she has to wear special garments (i.e., a surgical gown, gloves, cap, and mask), not ordinary street clothes. He or she has to carefully abide by a long list of rules. Every instrument must itself be sterile ('clean') and must be counted so that none is lost. And the stakes of all this are very high. Breaking these rules can cause defilement which can cause real harm.

Another analogy would be to think about a nuclear power plant. Do nuclear engineers and technicians go about their work carelessly, waltzing into the reaction chamber as if they're having a picnic? Do they invite their buddies to come goof off and juggle some uranium with them? No! They do what they do carefully. There are regulations for who is authorized to be on the premises at all, and within that, who has clearance to go where and do what kinds of work. There is special protective gear a technician has to wear when entering any radiological area or approaching any nuclear materials. It takes years and years of rigorous training for a reason: because the stakes are so high.

What goes for a hospital operating room and for a nuclear power plant is also true at the tabernacle. If the Book of Numbers shows us nothing else, it's how high the stakes of holiness are. And this 'holiness' isn't the same thing as 'morality.' The most decent, upstanding, moral member of the Tribe of Issachar has no place inside the tabernacle. And yet the sons of Aaron have to be there. One of the differences between Numbers 18 and earlier statements of this theme is the characterization of priests as 'bearing iniquity.' The main point being made here is that the priests will assume all the risks for any mistakes they make in carrying out their sacred ministry. They have nobody they can pass the buck to, no one they can hide behind. There are conditions where even a son of Aaron can't be allowed to enter sacred space or to do sacred work. If he's got a 'blemish' – a mutilation, a disease, a disability – then he can't function as a priest or enter holy space (Leviticus 21:17-23). He's also banned while he's drunk (Leviticus 10:9). He can't come without purifying his hands and feet with water first – that's what the bronze basin was for (Exodus 30:20-21). And if a priest comes to work improperly dressed, that's also a deadly fault (Exodus 28:42-43). Even if a priest follows all these rules, there are still places he can't go (the Holy of Holies) and things he can't do, like offer 'strange fire' as Aaron's eldest sons did and died (Leviticus 10:1-2; cf. Numbers 3:4).

Israel's priesthood is a burden as much as a privilege. A surgeon has not only a lot of responsibility but is going to be exposed to a lot of hazards – one study lists (among others) bloodborne pathogens, surgical smoke, sharp injuries, radiation, inhalation exposure to various drugs, and more. A nuclear technician not only has a lot of responsibility but is also exposed to some extra radiation, even under the safest working conditions. And a priest in Israel not only has a lot of responsibility, but is inevitably exposed to a holy God in some ways far riskier than anything a surgeon or a nuclear technician is going to face. When they do wrong, they're held strictly to account. When they do right, there's still a burden to be carried. And not only that, but Moses had earlier told the priests that part of their job was to *"bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD"* (Leviticus 10:17). In some way, Israel's priests carry the weight of Israel's sins for them. But the point of this iniquity-bearing is to atone, to put the sin safely under lock and key, to quarantine it where it can be safely processed and disposed of.

Another part of this first speech is the renewed emphasis that the priests will be supported by Aaron's 'brothers' – i.e., the rest of the Tribe of Levi. The Levites were given up by Israel, *"given to the LORD"* (Numbers 18:6). And then, in turn, God took them and gave them *"as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the people of Israel, to serve the service of the sons of Israel at the Tent of Meeting and to make atonement for the sons of Israel"* (Numbers 8:19).

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Thank you to trustees Floyd Mast and Ian Pammer
for installing a new external light over the fellowship hall doors
on Saturday, October 28!
(See picture by Floyd, left.)

Mailbag

From Ruth Snader, 16 October 2023

We miss the church family at Mt. Culmen church. We are adjusting to new friendships in Honey Brook Presbyterian Church, and I [Ruth] still have friends from long ago that I knew from youth years. ... Say hello to everyone at church.

Love in Christ,
Bob & Ruth

Statistical Report (September 2023)

Worship Service Attendance

09/03/23	23
09/10/23	26
09/17/23	26
<u>09/24/23</u>	<u>23</u>
Average:	25 (24.5)

Offerings Received

\$475.00
\$1,005.00
\$1,224.00
<u>\$1,035.00</u>
Total: \$3,739.00

Birthdays (November 2023)

11/7 – Kim Sweigart	11/9 – Kenny Bannon	11/10 – Brenna Pammer
11/13 – Robert Sparr	11/13 – Ruth Snader	11/15 – Rebekah Brown
11/20 – Mary Ringler (Abby Eberly's daughter)	11/25 – Joyce Garber	11/26 – Sally Arment

Anniversaries (November 2023)

11/7 – Leroy and Martha Stoltzfus
11/13 – Robert and Ruth Snader
11/30 – Gerald Felpel

(Continued from Page 13, "Order, Order in the Church!")

As a result of God's giving, the Levites are joined with the priests as their assistants for the ministry of the tabernacle (18:2). And just as the priests bear iniquity connected to the priesthood, so the Levites share with the priests the holy responsibility to "*bear iniquity connected with the sanctuary*" (18:1). The Levites must protect and support the work of the priests. But if either they or the priests forget the distinction in their roles – if the priests allow the Levites to do priest-only things – then the result will be that "*they and you die*" (18:3). Much less should Aaron's sons (priests) or Aaron's brothers (Levites) ever allow any 'outsider' (lay Israelite or Gentile) to trespass on sacred space or sacred work (18:4)! Both the priests and the Levites share the responsibility to carefully guard sacred stuff from invasion by non-Levites (even Israelites, who are all – in a lesser sense – holy), just as the priests must guard most-sacred stuff from invasion by Levites. As Paul's co-worker Clement summed this up: "The proper services have been given to the high priest; and to the other priests, the appropriate offices have been assigned; and upon the Levites, the appropriate ministries are imposed. The layperson is bound by the rules for the laity."

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(Continued from Page 14, "Order, Order in the Church!")

What do we do with this? Well, first we remember that Jesus Christ is our supreme High Priest in heaven, the "*high priest of the good things that have come*" (Hebrews 9:11). And just like Aaron's sons (the priests of Israel) bore the congregation's iniquity so as to make atonement for them, Jesus our High Priest was "*offered once to bear the sins of many*" to make a perfect atonement (Hebrews 9:28). What Aaron was in part, Jesus is in full!

But the disciples of the apostles saw that the Book of Numbers still had relevance. Because in the writings they left us, they drew further parallels between the Levitical ministry of the old covenant and the clerical ministry of the new covenant. Where Old Testament Israel had one high priest, each area church had the high priesthood of Jesus embodied in its own bishop, who served with high-priestly authority. Where Old Testament Israel had Aaron's sons for priests, each area church had its presbyters – (the Greek word *presbyteroi* is where we get the English word 'priest' from) – and where Old Testament Israel had Levites, each area church had its deacons.

These were chosen in succession from the apostles by the laying on of hands, as Paul's follower Clement records it: "Preaching throughout the country and the cities, the apostles appointed their firstfruits (after testing them by the Spirit) to be bishops and deacons for those who would believe. ... Our apostles also knew, through the Lord Jesus Christ, that there'd be strife over the office of bishop. For this reason..., they appointed those previously mentioned and gave them a permanent character so that, when they died, other approved men would succeed them in their ministry." Already in Hebrews, this ordination – "*the laying on of hands*" – is said to be a foundation-level teaching of the Christian faith, on par with basics like "*faith toward God*" and "*resurrection of the dead*" (Hebrews 6:1-2)!

Ignatius, a bishop of Antioch and himself also a disciple of the apostles, referred to this system as "God's harmony: the bishop sitting in the place of God, and the presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles, and the deacons (especially dear to me) entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ." He told another church: "All should respect the deacons as they would Jesus Christ, just as they respect the bishop as representing the Father and the presbyters as the council of God and the college of the apostles." So, he said, "you should do nothing without the bishop and the presbyters. ... All of you should run together as into one divine sanctuary, as upon one altar, upon one Jesus Christ."

The original Christians placed a lot of emphasis on the church order that they learned from the apostles and believed had been commanded by the Lord himself. And so when they read this chapter in the Book of Numbers, they read it as having continued relevance to Christian ministers – bishops, presbyters, and deacons. By the fourth century, a Christian monk named Jerome put it as clear as anybody could: "What Aaron and his sons and the Levites were in the temple, let the bishops and presbyters and deacons in our church claim this for themselves."

Okay, that covers God's first speech to Aaron (Numbers 18:1-7). In God's second speech (18:8-24), God shifts into a discussion of the rights that come with the responsibilities outlined in the first speech. After all the headaches of the long series of rebellions against God's order in Israel, it's no wonder he wanted to stress here how the priests were going to be rewarded for all these troubles. First, the Aaronic priests have both a charge and a privilege over all the consecrated gifts that Israel was required to bring to God (18:8). Every priest had the right to eat the sin-offerings, guilt-offerings, and tribute-offerings, so long as they ate them within the tabernacle's holy courts (18:9-10). Not only that, but they could take home the wave-offerings and everything offered as firstfruits, and that's what their families would eat (18:11-13). This included a title to every firstborn animal that couldn't be redeemed for money (18:14-19).

Second, the work of the Levites is also compensated in a special way. They don't have the same right to eat from the sacrifices. With respect to sacrifices, Levites stand in the same position as every other Israelite layperson. However, as compensation for their holy service toward Israel's salvation (18:22-23), they'll live off of "*every tithe in Israel*" (18:21). A tenth of the productive power of Israel's other twelve tribes (counting the 'half-tribes' of Ephraim and Manasseh as one each) will go toward sustaining this one other 'thirteenth' tribe in its holy work, by God's command. And because they get these special rights, God clarifies that neither the Aaronic priests nor the Levites in general are going to have any claim on the promised land itself. That is, when the promised land is divvied up, priests and Levites get no territory, no farmland on which to raise their own food (18:20, 24) – (although Levites will get "*the cities of the Levites*," which come with pastureland on which to graze their tithed livestock [Leviticus 10:33-34]).

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(Continued from Page 15, "Order, Order in the Church!")

Okay, so what does any of that mean to us. We're Christians living under the new covenant! Well, the Apostle Paul tells us what it means. *"Don't you know that those working at the temple eat the things of the temple? And that those serving at the altar partake in the altar? So also the Lord has instituted that those who proclaim the gospel shall live off of the gospel"* (1 Corinthians 9:13-14). That is, Paul's principle is that, since old-covenant clergy were compensated with sacrifices and firstfruits and tithes, that's why the Lord himself has commanded the same sort of support for new-covenant clergy – for bishops and presbyters and deacons of the church. Paul himself, as an apostle (the template for a bishop), had that right; he merely chose not to use it for tactical reasons (1 Corinthians 9:15-18). But he equally insisted that he had the right, and so do all the clergy – a *"right to refrain from working [in the sense of secular work] for a living"* (1 Corinthians 9:6), to commit themselves to gospel ministry and yet to rest assured they will *"eat and drink"* (1 Corinthians 9:4), a *"rightful claim on you"* other Christians to support as priests/Levites (1 Corinthians 9:12), to reap material benefits on account of clergy's spiritual service (1 Corinthians 9:11).

In the third century, a Christian teacher named Origen, commenting on this part of Numbers 18, pointed out that the Pharisees would have scrupulously observed all the rules about sacrifices, firstfruits, offerings, and tithes – and so they provided unfailing support to the old-covenant priests/Levites. (As Origen puts it, they *"do not dare to taste of the harvest of the land before offering to the priests their firstfruits and separating off a tenth for the Levites."*) But Jesus says to us that *"unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:20). So if providing first for the clergy was part of the Pharisees' righteousness, and if Christians can't enter the kingdom without going beyond even that, Origen wonders what hope there is if *"I do none of these things, but use the harvest of the land in such a way that the priest doesn't know about it, the Levite is unaware of it, the divine altar doesn't perceive it?"* Origen asks uncomfortable questions about Christians' priorities.

After the two speeches to Aaron, God closes with a third speech directed to Moses (18:25-32). And in this, God adds a new wrinkle to all these privileges he just outlined. In talking to Aaron, God repeated things he said before; but he turns back to Moses to bring something new. And maybe he does it because, if Aaron says this to the Levites, they'll think Aaron is pulling some kind of power play on them. Because this is about what the Levites owe the priests.

God already said that *"to the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance"* (18:21). And they aren't just required to wait around; they actively 'take' the tithe from the Israelites. But when they take it, they themselves must then *"present a contribution from it to the LORD – a tithe of the tithe"* (18:26). The Levites are holy. Levites get the tithes. But they must give as well as receive. They are owed tithes, but they also owe tithes on what they get, just as much as if they'd grown and processed those goods themselves (18:27). When it comes to their relationship to Israel, the Levites are holy; but in this respect, they're grouped in with regular Israelites, too.

What happens with it? *"From it, you shall give the LORD's contribution to Aaron the priest"* (18:28). It goes to the high priest, and perhaps also the rest of the priesthood, as ordered by God. So in this way, the Levite privilege can come back to earth a bit – instead of the Levites living high in luxury, they'll yield to the priesthood this top 1%, the best of the best of Israel's total productivity (18:29). What's left is then – and only then – released to the Levites for their own use. They can take it home and eat it, as if they'd farmed and harvested and raised it themselves (18:30-31). Until then, remember, the whole tithe is holy and is restricted in its use; it's reserved by God. Only this tithing on the tithe 'purchases' the remainder of the tithe back for ordinary consumption by the Levites. If the Levites were not to tithe on the tithe, then they'd be stealing from God everything they ate, and in fact, they'd be profaning it – and that would be a serious sin. But by tithing, they buy from God the freedom to use the rest of what they're given.

This third speech closes with a warning, though. The Levites, in paying their tithe on the tithes they live on, are still to respect the rules of holiness. *"You shall not profane the holy things of the people of Israel, lest you die"* (18:32). Property that was reserved solely for in-temple use, and foods that were reserved for consumption by the priests, are off-limits to Levites – only the priests and their households may eat these 'holy things.' For an unauthorized person to eat the holy things that Israel has given to God would actually *"cause them to bear iniquity and guilt by eating their holy things"* (Leviticus 22:16). So when the Levites read that law, they have to understand that when it's said, *"A lay person shall not eat of a holy thing"* (Leviticus 22:10), Levites count as 'laity' for this, too.

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(Continued from Page 16, "Order, Order in the Church!")

This study has been a long one, and it might seem like it's not terribly relevant to our lives today. And yet it's in our Bible, and in some way – maybe not an obvious way, but some way nevertheless – *"all Scripture is... profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness"* (2 Timothy 3:16). And so Numbers 18 must be profitable for us. It teaches us, it reproves us, it corrects us, it trains us in righteousness. Numbers 18 is part of God's education to make us *"complete, equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:17).

So, if you've been patient enough to read this far, what can we, in general, get from this lesson? Well, it reveals truth about God. It shows us that God is *"not the God of disorder but of peace"* (1 Corinthians 14:33). Disorder, chaos, instability – these are not things God claims for his own. In Numbers 18, disorder in holy places, holy people, holy things is a recipe not just for personal death but for national tragedy.

The priests and Levites are assigned a heavy responsibility to guard against anyone, even their own, treating holy things lightly or trespassing on them, even with the best of subjective intentions. The priests and the Levites are each assigned certain privileges, rights they receive from the rest of Israel because of these risks the priests and Levites each assume on their behalf. The priests offer essential spiritual benefits to Israel, so it's only fair for them to receive material support. The Levites support the spiritual benefits that the priests bring, so they too receive material support of a different kind. Yet they, spiritually benefited by the priests' ministry, also materially support the priests.

In each of these matters, right down to the foods they can or can't eat, the priests and Levites and Israel's laity have rules to follow, rules that establish a hierarchy of the sacred – because that's God's will, that's God's order, for Israel. The overriding theme is: "Don't trespass. Don't overstep these lines. Don't be casual, don't cut corners, when all this is at stake." Only this ordered system can shield Israel from destruction ('the wrath of the Lord').

God calls on Israel to take all this stuff seriously, and to reject disorder. In its place, they can have peace. It's true, as the New Testament reminds us in retrospect, that *"it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins"* (Hebrews 10:4). The ministry of Israel's priests and Israel's Levites was only ever *"a shadow of the good things to come"* (Hebrews 10:1). *"Every priest [of Aaron's line] stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins"* (Hebrews 10:12). The sacrifices reminded of sin, they covered sin, but they couldn't remove sin – so they couldn't effect permanent healing, couldn't perfect the soul (Hebrews 10:2-3).

Yet in covering sin, in preventing wrath from erupting, the levitical ministry of the old covenant could have – had it been kept in good order – kept a sort of peace with God, a peace in Israel. Had the priests and Levites always done what they ought to have done, Israel would have been incredibly blessed. Good order in holy things brings blessing.

And that speaks to the church today. We too easily use 'holy' as a synonym for 'righteous' or 'moral' or 'decent.' We apply it to individuals' inner lives and maybe outer behavior, but have lost the awareness Christians used to have of holy offices, holy places, holy times, holy objects – that there'd be something really *wrong*, really *disorderly*, with using holy objects for wrong purposes, with having profane activities at holy times or in holy places, with people not in holy offices doing work that's meant to be holy. We have too small an idea of holiness. We balk at good order.

These are hard words for the typical modern Christian – especially for us low-church Evangelicals, who are most allergic to these ideas. But contrary to our modern trends, the Apostle Paul was deeply, deeply concerned *"to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 7:35). The Apostle Paul preached zealously and insistently that *"all things should be done decently and in order"* (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Good order is for the church, too. Good order is for respecting the way Christ arranged his church. Good order is for upholding the harmony of our worship. Good order keeps unholiness out of what's holy. Good order honors holy places, times, offices, people, and things so they can unlock spiritual blessing for the whole people of God (who, like old-covenant Israel, all have a thread of holiness); good order is about the people of God offering back material blessing to holy places, times, people, and things, as a sign of reverence to God. Good order loves God, and God loves good order! So the word of God, recorded in God's own speeches to Aaron and Moses in Numbers 18, bangs the everlasting gavel and cries: "Order! Order in the church!" May our church be well-ordered by God's harmony!

Preaching Calendar (November – December 2023)

Worship services commence at 10:00 AM on Sundays. We hope to see you there with us!

- November 5 (Pentecost 23):** Sermon Title: “Discover and Define”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:10-14, 18-20
“We Search the Starlit Milky Way” (45)
“Let the Words of My Mouth” (568)
- November 12 (Pentecost 24):** Sermon Title: “Venus, Mars, and Eden”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:18-22; 1:27
“O Lord, May Church and Home Combine” (510)
“Blest Be the Tie That Binds” (209)
- November 19 (Pentecost 25):** Sermon Title: “Wedded Love, Mysterious Law”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:20-25
“The Voice That Breathed O'er Eden” (insert)
“The Church's One Foundation” (206 – vv. 1-2, 5)
- November 26 (Christ the King):** Sermon Title: “Onward, Outward, Upward”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:28-31; 2:15; 4:1
“Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun” (479)
“Onward, Christian Soldiers” (456)
- December 3 (Advent 1):** Sermon Title: “The Throne of His Father David”
Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 16:4-5, 11-13 + 2 Sam. 5:1-4, 10; 6:17-19
“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (87)
“O Jesus, King of Glory” (insert)
- December 10 (Advent 2):** Bishop Randy Sizemore will be with us to bring the sermon.
More details to follow later.
- December 17 (Advent 3):** In lieu of the usual format of our worship service, we will be having
our annual Christmas cantata! More information to follow.
- December 24 (Advent 4):** Sermon Title: “Tonight's the Night!”
Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-21
“Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” (97)
“O Little Town of Bethlehem” (96)
- December 31 (Christmas 1):** Sermon Title: “King of All the Years”
Scripture Reading: Psalm 72:1-7, 12-14, 18-19
“Once in Royal David's City” (insert)
“Go, Tell It on the Mountain” (107)
- January 7 (Epiphany 1):**
(Communion Service) Sermon Title: “Gold, Grain, and Glory”
Scripture Reading: Psalm 72:1-4, 8-11, 15-19
“Eternal Source of Every Joy” (insert)
“We Three Kings of Orient Are” (116)
- January 14 (Epiphany 2):** Sermon Title: “Two Trees”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17
“Teach Me Thy Will, O Lord” (381)
“Hail! Tree of Life, Planted Anew” (insert)

Quotes for Thought

“I exhort you all, therefore, to obey the word about righteousness and to practice all endurance like you saw with your own eyes in [the saints who came before you]. ... Be assured that all these did not run in vain, but in faith and righteousness, and that they are with the Lord in the place they deserved, with whom they also suffered. For they did not love the present age, but him who died for them and who was raised by God for us. Stand fast, therefore, in these things, secure and immovable in your faith, and follow the example of the Lord, loving the brotherhood, caring for each other, united in the truth, helping one another with the gentleness of the Lord, despising no one. When you can do good, do not put it off, for charitable giving frees from death.”

– St. Polycarp of Smyrna

Philippians 9.1-10.2 (c. AD 110), in W. Varner, *The Apostolic Fathers: An Introduction and Translation* (T&T Clark, 2023), 172

“Everything else diminishes with time – physical beauty, the greatness of houses, kingdoms, positions of power, glories – and, as if swept away by river currents, departs and is passed on into oblivion. Only the martyrs' memory is beyond all time and higher than these obstacles, and no one can expunge it from eternity.”

– St. John Chrysostom

On All the Martyrs 8 (c. AD 400), in *Popular Patristics Series* 31:247

“Decency and right living have all but disappeared and, as vigorous church discipline gradually collapses, a pestilential flood of vice and depravity of every kind grows deeper day by day. ... And since a wicked people does not deserve good rulers..., thus it happens that while the world's rulers are more interested in wealth than law, they fail to use legal sanctions to curb their subjects who are prone to evil. ... Just as the shepherd rescues an only sheep from the ravenous jaws of the attacking beast..., so too has Christ rescued you from the mouth of the cruel plunderer who sought to have you serve him as the world was falling apart.”

– St. Peter Damian

Letter 86, to Desiderius of Monte Cassino (Oct./Nov. 1061), in *Fathers of the Church: Medieval Continuation* 3:255-257

“It is the indispensable duty of every church to provide, if possible, a suitable place for the public worship of God, and a competent teacher to lead in his worship and perform the other duties of the ministerial office. ... The second duty incumbent on churches... consists in faithfully maintaining the discipline of Christ in his house. ... A third duty incumbent on churches... consists in assembling at proper seasons for social worship.”

– Edward Payson

Sermon preached to Cumberland Council of Churches in 1822, in *Sermons...* (William Hyde, 1831), 259-261

“Politics has succeeded only in messing up the world more and more, because politics does not go deep enough. It cannot touch the moving depths of the master motives in human nature. Christianity does. The Christ-program provides a new world by way of new men and women. That is why the Christian remedy is adequate for the most drastic social and political situations. This is the way Jesus planned to build up his kingdom. ... And, by the wise program of Christ, these Christian disciples who enter his fellowship keep on multiplying themselves. Every Christian is commissioned to be a missionary. The saved, in turn, save.”

– William T. Ellis

“Something Bigger Than Politics,” Sunday School lesson for 25 November 1923, in *Lancaster New Era* (24 November 1923): 4

“The vision of a single Christian fold and of a single shepherd..., our Lord Jesus Christ..., must not for a moment be absent from our minds, while the proliferation of Christian sects and differentiated groups should never be gratifying to us. ... Consequently, the unity of the faithful with Christ and with one another is the... primary and most essential concern. ... Yet, in fact, it is obvious to all that Christians today are divided into numerous groups, some of which accept as truth views that others reject ... Until such unity of spirit is achieved, we must overcome many hurdles ... We sincerely expect that the words of our Lord Jesus Christ about the one fold and the single shepherd will ultimately be realized – even if at the eleventh hour.”

– Bartholomew I of Constantinople

Speech given 30 November 2004, in *Speaking the Truth in Love* (Fordham University Press, 2011), 212-215

PRAYER GUIDE

- *We praise God* for all the wondrous blessings he's given us, most notably the ministry of his Son (in death, resurrection, and exaltation to the Father's right hand) and the gift of his Holy Spirit; and *we pray* that God would glorify his name above all else and would bring his kingdom more fully to earth.
- *We pray for our denomination, our congregation, and the church universal*, that God would bless us at all levels with faithfulness, wisdom, vision, and fortitude to earnestly labor in his vineyard.
 - *We pray particularly for* our pastor **Rev. Jonathan J. Brown** and for **our church board**.
 - *We pray also for* **our Evangelical Congregational Church leadership**: our bishop **Randy Sizemore**, executive director **Kevin Henry**, and district field director **Keith Miller**; the **Global Ministries Community** under **Ted Rathman**; the **Kingdom Extension Community** under **Mike Snedeker**; the **Church Health Community** under **Gary Kuehner**; the **Missional Alignment Community** under **Bishop Randy Sizemore**; and the **Ministerial Development Community** under **Matthew Hill**.
- *We pray for our missionary partners* (such as **Dan Quigley** and others), that God would keep them safe and faithful, would focus their efforts on God's work, and would grant success in accordance with his holy will.
- *We pray for other churches and pastors in our community*, that God would keep all congregations united in one holy faith and devoted to the ardent service of one and the same kingdom and of its King, Jesus.
- *We pray for the salvation of our whole community and its maturation in Christian discipleship*, knowing that there is hope in Jesus for all people and for entire communities to reflect the righteous love of God.
- *We pray for an end to disease outbreaks* such as coronavirus, mpox, cholera, dengue, diphtheria, and RSV.
- *We pray for an easing to the economic suffering around the world*, especially due to the inflation surge.
- *We pray for those suffering in the wake of disasters around the world*, that God would have mercy:
 - *We pray for* those afflicted by natural disasters such as famine; drought; wildfires; bushfires in Australia; tropical cyclones in Mexico, Vanuatu, and elsewhere; Storm Babet in Scotland, England, and Germany; flooding in India and Sri Lanka; mudslides or landslides in Sri Lanka and Cameroon; earthquakes in Nepal and Afghanistan; etc.
 - *We pray for* those afflicted by accidents such as plane crashes in Canada, Brazil, and Utah; boat accidents in the Philippines, Congo, and Germany; train collisions in Bangladesh and India; bus/truck accidents in Mexico and Italy; the van crash in Germany; multiple-vehicle collisions in Egypt and Louisiana; explosions in Nigeria and India; fires in Spain, Egypt, India, and Kazakhstan; the church roof collapse in Mexico; etc.
- *We pray also for those victimized by violence and social ills, especially the Israel-Hamas war and Russian invasion of Ukraine*, that God would make his peace manifest to the injured, traumatized, and grieving.
 - *We pray additionally for* those afflicted by the Uyghur genocide in China; war in Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, Myanmar, etc.; the India-Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan, and Armenia-Azerbaijan conflicts; insurgency in Egypt, Colombia, Chad, Cameroon, Congo, the Maghreb, Nigeria, Niger, India, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Mozambique, Pakistan, South Sudan, Turkey, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Peru, and Libya; gang/cartel wars in Mexico, Ecuador, and Haiti; kidnappings in Israel, Mexico, Uganda, Nigeria, Cameroon, etc.; protest-related violence around the world; airstrikes or rocket attacks in Ukraine, Israel, Gaza, Syria, Iraq, Western Sahara, etc.; mass shootings in Thailand, Egypt, Belgium, Mexico, Canada, Maine, and Florida; shootouts in the Philippines and Kashmir; the mass stabbing at a French high school; other stabbings in England, South Korea, and Illinois; bombings in Turkey, Niger, Afghanistan (including at a mosque), Somalia, and India (at a Jehovah's Witness convention); the Hamas-led massacres in Israel; the humanitarian crisis in Gaza; vandalism and attacks on churches; the American opioid epidemic; human rights violations (e.g., abortion and human trafficking); the rising wave of antisemitism and other ideologies of hate; and the refugee crisis.
- *We pray for* all who serve and protect us, including **civic leaders, police, firefighters, medical responders, and members of the military**: May God keep them safe, just, wise, sincere, humble, and accountable as they administer justice, guard against chaos, prevent harm, and defend the vulnerable.
- *We pray for our nation and its government* at all levels and in all branches, that God would move our leaders to repent of unjust or unmerciful practices and laws; that God would crown them with wisdom, security, peace, and civility toward all; and that God would give them godly hearts to live and govern rightly.

PRAYER GUIDE

- *We pray for the persecutors and maligners of the church around the world:*
 - *We pray for* the conversion of terrorists and other people of violence into disciples of the Prince of Peace.
 - *We pray for* the wisdom of God to be made manifest to skeptics and critics.
 - *We pray for* the Spirit's boldness to fill the hearts of all believers to witness to Jesus in life and in death.
- *We pray for the families and friends of many who have entered their rest in the past year, including:*
 - For the family of **Roy Sweigart** (Kim's father-in-law), who entered rest on November 16, 2022.
 - For the family of **Ginger Goudie** (the Hesses' friend Jim's wife), who entered rest November 28, 2022.
 - For the family of **Earl Pickel**, who entered rest on December 19, 2022.
 - For the family of **David Hurst**, who entered rest on December 22, 2022.
 - For the family of **Letty Clark**, who entered rest on December 25, 2022.
 - For the family of **Bob Forrey**, who entered rest on January 5, 2023.
 - For the family of **Paul Bauman** (Joyce Good's brother), who entered rest on January 6, 2023.
 - For the family of **June Harter** (Sue Eshelman's mother), who entered rest on January 24, 2023.
 - For the family of **Darlene Young**, who entered rest on February 1, 2023.
 - For the family of **Mike Diem**, who entered rest on February 8, 2023.
 - For the family of **Alvin Wise** (Jean Hess' uncle), who entered rest on February 22, 2023.
 - For the family of **Grace Sprecher** (Sharon Mast's aunt), who entered rest on February 22, 2023.
 - For the family of **Herman Martin**, who entered rest on February 25, 2023.
 - For the family of **Leon Hartranft**, who entered rest on March 11, 2023.
 - For the family of **Amanda Hoffert**, who entered rest on March 11, 2023.
 - For the family of **Lois Gift**, who entered rest on March 20, 2023.
 - For the family of **William Riegel** (Del's brother-in-law), who entered rest on March 27, 2023.
 - For the family of **Darryl Imler** (Leroy Stoltzfus' nephew), who entered rest on April 1, 2023.
 - For the family of **Glenn Weber**, who entered rest on April 4, 2023.
 - For the family of **Clarence Jones** (Floyd Mast's uncle), who entered rest on April 11, 2023.
 - For the family of **Linda Wonder** (Sharon Mast's stepmother), who entered rest on April 27, 2023.
 - For the family of **John Herr** (Abby Eberly's friend), who entered rest on April 29, 2023.
 - For the family of **Sherry Stoltzfus** (Esther's sister-in-law's mother), who entered rest on May 4, 2023.
 - For the family of **Jim Brubaker**, who entered rest on May 5, 2023.
 - For the family of **Clarence Bauman** (Joyce Good's brother), who entered rest on June 17, 2023.
 - For the family of **Ben Schweitzer** (Kim Sweigart's son-in-law's friend), who entered rest July 10, 2023.
 - For the family of **Mary Martin** (Abby Eberly's friend's sister), who entered rest on July 15, 2023.
 - For the family of **Ray Snader**, who entered rest on July 17, 2023.
 - For the family of **John Kendig** (Sharon Mast's brother-in-law), who entered rest on July 19, 2023.
 - For the family of **Mary Skiba** (Sally Arment's cousin), who entered rest on August 20, 2023.
 - For the family of **Ivan Zimmerman** (Ray Snader's brother-in-law), who entered rest on August 22, 2023.
 - For the family of **Della Bollinger** (Floyd Mast's aunt), who entered rest on August 27, 2023.
 - For the family of **Harley Steenhoek** (the Walkers' grandpa), who entered rest on September 2, 2023.
 - For the family of **Elsie Martin** (Jean Hess's great-aunt), who entered rest on September 8, 2023.
 - For the family of **Clarence Good** (Jean Hess's uncle), who entered rest on September 13, 2023.
 - For the family of **Luke Ringler** (Abby's son-in-law's brother), who entered rest on September 25, 2023.
 - For the family of **Pat Street** (Nancy Mountz's sister), who entered rest on September 27, 2023.
 - For the family of **Daniel Newswanger** (Mabel's husband), who entered rest on October 8, 2023.
 - For the family of **Joyce Martin** (Jean Hess's cousin), who entered rest on October 11, 2023.
 - For the family of **Shirley Riggins** (Deb Messner's mother), who entered rest on October 13, 2023.
 - For the family of **Titus Burkholder** (Leon Hess's cousin), who entered rest on October 16, 2023.
 - May the Lord give immeasurable peace, strength, and comfort to all who face loss and grief.

PRAYER GUIDE

- *We pray for all dementia sufferers* and for **their caretakers**, that God would lighten burdens, restore clarity to injured minds, and speak directly to hearts and souls with his comfort, his peace, and the light of grace.
- *We pray for all suffering from cancer* – (including Randy Vandill, Cindy Ebersole, Troy Frey, Lisa Mast, Betty Kennedy [Del Ream's niece-in-law], Earl Martin [Miriam Rissler's brother-in-law], Adrienne Hedges [Brenna Pammer's friend], Donna Rhodes [Pastor Jonathan's aunt], Brandy Rhodes [Pastor Jonathan's cousin], Doris Snader, Gene Sensenig, Erwin Sensenig Jr., Rev. Marlin Lafferty, Rev. Don Wert, etc.) – that God shield them from pain, restore their bodies, comfort them, and bless their doctors.
- *We pray for the other assorted health concerns (and other needs) of:*
 - Earl and Pauline Good + John Good (Earl's brother) + David Good + Dave Embry Jr.
 - Floyd Mast + Steven Mast (Floyd's son) + Cindy Bannon + Marilyn Wilson (Cindy's mother)
 - Barry Ream + Delores Jaxel + Clair Kohl + Jeff Kohl + Henry Kohl + Shawn and Candace Sweigart
 - Cherri Snader + Lawrence Groff + Jim Becker + Don Pickle + Dot Yohn
 - Linda Burkholder + Mary Andrews + Raymond Bannon
 - Barty Messner + Edna Binner + Shannon Messner
 - Henrietta Hoshauer + Brandon Wilson + Floyd Heuyard
 - Violet Stauffer + Paul Ford + Lori Zimmerman
 - Jerry Felpel and Doris Getz + Dawn Acevedo (Cindy Hoffer's sister)
 - Josh Kendig (Sharon Mast's son) + Connie Dieter (Leon and Jean Hess's daughter)
 - Larsen Houck (Shirley Good's great-grandson) + Kayley Smith (the Hesses' granddaughter)
 - Kathryn Shirk (Jean Hess's aunt) + Sonya Shirey (Jean's friend) + Dennis Wanner
 - Abby Eberly + Linda Sweitzer (Abby's friend)
 - Ray Arment + Butch and Mike Skiba + Emily Sensenig
 - Sharon Geib (Deb Kimmel's sister) + Cassie Geib (Sharon Geib's mother-in-law)
 - Veanna Baxter + Julia Reed (Veanna's sister) + Shirley Buchanan
 - Jeremy Kurman + Warren Weinhold + Jody Freeman
 - Jess Pennepacker + Charles Yingst + Ralph Mountz
 - Carl and Grace Nolt + Vera Kochel + Carl Martin
 - Robert and Barbara Sparr + Rodger Whittaker
 - Elizabeth Zimmerman (John Eberly's sister)
 - Dorothy Long (Sharon Mast's boss's sister)
 - Madelynne Walker + Ben + Tim + Minerva Hufford
 - Troy Frey and both of his parents + Tory Lingg
 - Ken Keen and Nancy Fox (Floyd Mast's friends)
 - Donna Sensenig + Larry Sensenig + Daryll Sensenig
 - Bob Buckwalter (Abby Eberly's friend's husband)
 - Alice Vidzicki (Deb Kimmel's friend's mother)
 - Delores, Jeremiah, and Bobby Snader
 - Carol Briggs (Ruth Snader's sister) + Ken Cochran (Ruth's cousin-in-law)
 - Linda Talbot (Cindy Ruth's sister) + Tom Schwer (Sharon Mast's stepbrother)
 - Cathy Bullock (Cindy Ruth's neighbor) + Ken Styer + Bret Hoffert + Jethro Hursh
 - Rebecca Lucas (the Walkers' family friend) + Rebecca Horst + Dillon Dewire + Barb Kern
 - Linda Ebert (Barb's friend) + the Bowmans (Barb's cousins) + Danielle (Barb's grandson's girlfriend)
- *We pray for other neighbors, friends, and believers in need*, that God would heal, provide, and comfort.
- *We pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit* upon our church, our community, our county, our nation, the Evangelical Congregational Church, and the church universal. *We pray for the whole church to be filled with a spiritual zeal for worship, evangelism, and discipleship. May the fires of revival fall!*
- *We praise God for all the prayers we've seen him answer and for his everlasting faithfulness!*